

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 14072 071749Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 DOTE-00 FMC-02 SAL-01

CG-00 DLOS-06 OES-06 L-03 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 NSC-05 /103 W

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R 071742Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5235

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

USNMR SHAPE

UNCLAS LONDON 14072

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SEAMEN'S STRIKE ACTION EMBARRASSES TUC
BUT WILL NOT DEFLECT IT FROM ITS CURRENT WAGE POLICY

SUMMARY. THE NATIONAL UNION OF SEAMEN (NUS CLAIMING TO
BE CAUGHT UNFAIRLY IN THE TRANSITION BETWEEN ONE WAGE
LIMIT AND ANOTHER HAS NARROWLY VOTED TO PERMIT STRIKE
ACTION IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS DEMANDS. IF THE LEADERSHI
DECIDES TO IMPLEMENT STRIKE ACTION, THIS IS EXPECTED TO
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PAGE 02 LONDON 14072 071749Z

BE IN THE FORM OF SPORADIC OR LIMITED ACTION, BUT THIS

WOULD CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION OF THE TUC-GOVERNMENT WAGE
LIMIT POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NUS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE STRIKE ACTION WAS A NARROW
ONE, 7,721 FOR ACTION AND 7,412 AGAINST WITH ABOUT 38
PERCENT OF THE UNION'S 48,000 SEAMEN ACTUALLY VOTING. THE
NARROWNESS OF THE VOTE APPEARS TO PRECLUDE ANYTHING MORE
THAN VERY LIMITED STRIKE ACTION. IN FACT, JIM SLATER,
THE UNION'S GENERAL SECRETARY, HAS INDICATED THAT HE
EXPECTS ONLY A "LITTLE BIT OF ACTION" BY HIS UNION AFTER
ITS EXECUTIVE MEETS TOMORROW IN LONDON TO DECIDE WHAT TO
DO ABOUT THE STRIKE MANDATE. THE ORIGIN OF THE DISPUTE
FLOWS FROM A CLAIM BY THE NUS THAT SINCE IT NEGOTIATED
A SUBSTANTIAL PAY AGREEMENT -- TO BE PAID IN THREE
STAGES -- BEFORE THE 6 POUND PAY LIMIT WAS AGREED TO IN
AUGUST 1975, IT IS THEREFORE ENTITLED TO THE FULL AWARD.
THE TUC ECONOMIC COMMITTEE EARLIER REJECTED THIS
INTERPRETATION AS DID THE GOVERNMENT.

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2. THE NUS' PREDICAMENT IS UNFORTUNATE, BUT THERE ARE
OTHER UNIONS WHICH WERE CAUGHT BETWEEN ONE PAY POLICY
AND ANOTHER. NEITHER THE TUC NOR THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE
SHIPPERS CAN ACCEPT THE NUS CLAIM WITHOUT OPENING UP A
"PANDORA'S BOX" OF SIMILAR CLAIMS FROM OTHER UNIONS AND,
MORE IMPORTANTLY, PLACE THE CURRENT WAGE LIMIT IN DIRE
JEOPARDY.

3. THE NUS ACTION EMBARRASSES THE TUC BUT IT IS NOT
LIKELY TO DEFLECT ITS COURSE AND ITS AGREEMENT WITH THE
GOVERNMENT ON PAY POLICY. LEN MURRAY, TUC GENERAL
SECRETARY, HAS IN FACT REITERATED THE TUC'S
INTERPRETATION. THE NUS MAY AGREE TO TAKE SOME LIMITED
ACTION BUT IT DOES NOT NOW APPEAR LIKELY TO BETTER ITS
PAY SITUATION.

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